

**Prepared Remarks by U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara
New York State Bar Association
Outstanding Prosecutor of the Year Award
January 25, 2017**

Introduction

- Thank you Jack (Chief Assistant DA, Queen's County) for that kind introduction and for inviting me to be here today.
- Congratulations to the other awardees here today on their outstanding achievements.
- Congratulations to the NYSBA in all you do.
- I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Ken Thompson. His death was a terrible and untimely loss. He dedicated his life to the pursuit of justice. He made the people of Brooklyn and the city safer. And we all mourn his loss, still.
- I am incredibly honored to be here today and accept this award.

Transition

- What I think (and hope) this honor means is that you are recognizing not something I have done, really (because I

have done very little), but that you are recognizing what my office has done, collectively.

- I learned something a little while back- if you hire people who are smarter and better than you, you get lots of awards.
- People sometimes think that I am doing the work; I am not. The work is done by the fantastically talented, committed men and women in my office – along with our partners at the NYPD, FBI, DEA and other agencies. I have the best team, in the world.
- **Because the men and women of my office are dedicated, every day, to keeping our streets safe, our homeland secure, our markets fair, and our government honest.**
- We do a wide range of cases. Not just cases against corrupt public officials – but also against murderers, cyber criminals, arms traffickers, drug dealers, gang members, insider traders, ponzi schemers, and every type of fraudster you can imagine.
- We try to bring justice not only to broken correctional institutions like Rikers Island but also to communities facing discrimination because of race or disability.
- And we also, of course, prosecute terrorists like the Times Square bomber, Faisal Shahzad, and recently the alleged Chelsea bomber, Ahmad Khan Rahami.

- I hope you also recognize that as important as WHAT we do is HOW we do it.
- We teach our people to perform their duties always in one way – do the right thing in the right way for the right reasons, always. That’s it. And no particular case or conviction could ever make me more proud than the principles underlying how my folks do their work.
- We are fearless and we are independent. And that, I can promise you, is not going to change. It doesn’t matter who comes and who goes in Washington D.C.
- There is a reason we are called the Sovereign District of New York. It has been joked that we have our own foreign policy.
- **We believe quantily that no one is above the law, no matter who you are, who you know, or how much money you have.**
 - And we will walk away from a case too. Fearless in both directions – bringing a case or declining a case.
- **We do our job, because it is the job to be done.**

Conclusion

- People often ask if it's odd to oversee federal prosecution because you see the worst in people --- killers, thieves, terrorists.
- They ask how I remain idealistic when that is what I see every day.
- The reason is: because I also see the best in people, the men and women at my office who work hard to do the right thing, to right wrongs, and do justice. And always to remember not just the humanity of who they are investigating, but their own humanity too.
- I want to close with a passage that means a lot to me. To this day, no class, no professor, no law book has ever conveyed to me more powerfully or persuasively what it means to be a human being as a lawyer than these words of the great defense lawyer Clarence Darrow.
 - o “[A]fter all, every human being’s life in this world is inevitably mixed with every other life and, no matter what laws we pass, no matter what precautions we take, unless the people we meet are kindly and decent and human and liberty-loving, then there is no liberty. Freedom comes from human beings, rather than from laws and institutions.”

- The longer I do this, the more I believe that the law is merely an instrument, and without the involvement of human hands, the law is as lifeless and uninspiring as a violin kept in its case.
- The law cannot compel us to love each other or respect each other.
- It cannot cancel hate or conquer evil; teach grace or extinguish apathy.
- Every day, the law's best aims are carried out, for good or ill, by human beings.
- And so, I am more than blessed to be able to carry out my duties with the best group of human beings I know – the men and women of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. This honor is their honor. Thank you.